GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:350
ANSWERED ON:20.10.2008
FAILURE OF FOODGRAIN BASED SCHEMES
Renge Patil Shri Tukaram Ganpatrao

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the schemes for providing foodgrains to the Below Poverty Line (BPL) persons at cheaper rates have failed to achieve their objectives due to the rampant corruption among Central and State Government Officials involved in the implementation of these schemes;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reaction of the Government thereto;

(c) whether the Government has formulated/proposes to formulate any other scheme to provide assistance to the poor people directly in place of these schemes; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD & PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SH. KANTI LAL BHURIA)

(a) & (b): No, Sir. Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) has evolved as a management system for distribution of foodgrains at affordable prices to poor sections of the society. Objective of the TPDS is to supply foodgrains at highly subsidized prices to targeted poor sections of the society.

The off-take of foodgrains under BPL and AAY categories over last 9 years has increased from 60.39% in 2000-01 to 91.06% in 2008-09 (upto July 2008). This shows that TPDS has been of great support to the BPL/AAY families and, therefore, it would not be correct to infer that the scheme has failed in achieving its objectives.

TPDS is operated under the joint responsibility of the Government of India and State/UT Governments. The Government of India carries out procurement of foodgrains for the TPDS, their storage, transportation and allocation to the State/UT Governments. The responsibility for allocation of foodgrains within a State/UT, identification of eligible families and issuance of ration cards to them, and supervision of distribution of allocated foodgrains to eligible families through a vast network of 4.96 lakh fair price shops rest with the respective State/UT Governments.

Government has been continually taking steps to strengthen the TPDS by improving its efficiency. Government got the TPDS evaluated by PEO (Planning Commission) and ORG MARG some time back. Certain shortcomings were pointed out in their evaluation reports received in 2005. In view of these reports and with a view to strengthen the TPDS and to curb leakages and diversion of foodgrains meant for TPDS, the Central Government, in consultation with State and UT Governments, evolved a 9-point Action Plan in 2006. This includes measures such as review of BPL and AAY lists for exclusion of ineligible families and inclusion of eligible families, ensuring leakage-free distribution by taking penal action against those found indulging in malpractices, involvement of Panchayati Raj Institution in functioning of Fair Price Shops (FPS), display of BPL and AAY lists at FPS, door step delivery of PDS commodities to FPS, etc. The Action Plan is under implementation in States and UTs since July 2006 and is being closely monitored by FPS level Vigilance Committees. As a result of this exercise, so far 14 States/UTs have reported deletion of 99.36 lakh bogus/ineligible cards since July, 2006 against 23.69 crore ration cards issued by the States/UTs as on 30.09.2008.

The Government has taken various other measures to improve functioning of the TPDS. A Revised Citizens` Charter has been issued and is being implemented since July, 2007. Monthly certification of delivery of allocated foodgrains to FPS and their distribution to ration card holders has been introduced from April, 2008. Training programmes for TPDS functionaries and awareness campaign for TPDS beneficiaries are being taken up. Computerization of TPDS operations has been initiated. Use of new technologies such as Global Positioning System to monitor movement of foodgrains under TPDS has been undertaken on a pilot basis. Policy guidelines have also been issued on distribution of wheat flour under the TPDS, so that the poor families are benefited. For increasing awareness on TPDS, publicity-cum-awareness campaign is also being taken up.

As the TPDS is operated through a vast network of 4.96 lakh FPS in the country and monitoring of functioning of FPS is in the domain of State and UT Governments, complaints on malpractices in working of the TPDS brought to the notice of the Central Government are sent to the concerned State/UT Government for taking remedial action. The Government has given instructions to all State/UT Governments to take action as per law against persons found in possession of bogus or fake ration cards and the Government staff found responsible for issuing ration cards to ineligible persons.

(c)&(d):Presently, a pilot scheme on smart card based delivery of foodgrains to beneficiaries under TPDS and another pilot scheme on direct cash transfer of food subsidy to BPL families are being formulated. The first scheme is proposed to be piloted in Haryana and Chandigarh and the second scheme in Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Haryana.